the Time Magazine to the effect that India and Pakistan have agreed to sign the CTBT;

(b) whether there has been change in India's stand in this regard and so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the matter was also raised by the Prime Minister of Japan with the India's Minister of External Affairs during the latter's visit to Japan; and

(d) if so, the stand taken by India and whether any positive assurance was given in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) No Sir. India's position on the CTBT was articulated by the Prime Minister in the UN General Assembly in September 1998 and in Parliament in December 1998. This was reiterated by the External Affairs Minister at the UN General Assembly in September 1999. The priority of our meeting the country's national security concerns having been addressed, the government believes that we now need to convey reassurance to the international community and, in this regard, desires to develop a national consensus. That remains the Government's position.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) India's position on the CTBT was reiterated.

Removal of obstacles in the issuance of passports

1566. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have drawn up a grandiose scheme for removing major obstacles in the issue of passports;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the revised procedure is likely to be implemented so as to make the passport Office more user-friendly?

THE MINISTER OF STATES IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) Government is constantly endeavouring to improve the issue of passports and

add to the convenience of passport applicants. Government have adopted several measures for streamlining the entire process of issue of passports. These inter alia include — increasing the availability of application froms by allowing printing, distribution and sale at nominal cost of passport forms by approved private printers; establishing 15 Passport Collection Centres to accept passport applications, in addition to the existing 28 Passport Offices; computerising processing procedures in 18 of the 28 Passport Offices; launch of the Central Passport Organisation web site; holding of passport adalats etc. The new measures proposed in the coming months include a "Tatkaal" scheme of issue of out of turn passports to eligible applicants and introduction of machine writing of passport booklets at the Regional Passport Office, Delhi.

Recent changes intorduced to further simplify procedures include: reducing to one from two years the requirement of police verification from all places of previous stay issuing full validity passports on post-police verifiction basis in cases of re-issue and duplicate passports where there is no change in address of the applicant, all cases where a Verification Certificate from an authrorised official is available and all employees of Central/State Governments, Public Sector Undertakings, Armed Forces and their spouses where NOC from the Head of Department is available.

Extradition Treaties Signed By India

1567. DR JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the extradition treaties signed by India since independence alongwith the objective behind signing such treaties; and

(b) how far this objective has been realised?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Since Independence, India has signed Extradition Treaties with nine countries i.e. Belgium, Bhutan, Canada, Hong Kong, Nepal, Russian Federation, U.A.E, U.K. and U.S.A. With two other countries—Netherlands and Switzerland—though the Extradition Treaties were signed before Independence, they were notified only after Independence under Extradition At, 1962,

The Extradition Treaties provide a legal framework for seeking extradition of fugitive criminals. The objective behind signing Extrad-